

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PEKING 02615 210922Z
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C O N F I D E N T I A L PEKING 2615

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, CH
SUBJECT: PEOPLE'S DAILY DELINEATES GANG OF FOUR'S PLOT, DELIVERS
BLOW TO CHAIRMAN HUA'S LEGITIMACY

REF: (A) HONG KONG 14685 (B) PEKING 2608 (NOTAL)

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. THE PEOPLE'S DAILY EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT'S
DECEMBER 17 COMMENTARY (REFTELS) ON "GANG OF FOUR"
MACHINATIONS SEEMINGLY DEMOLISHES THE PROPOSITION THAT WITH THE
PHRASE "WITH YOU IN CHARGE, I'M AT EASE" MAO PERSONALLY
SELECTED HUA KUO-FENG TO BE HIS PARTY SUCCESSOR. END
SUMMARY.

2. HUA'S CLAIM TO LEGITIMACY HAS RESTED IN LARGE PART ON
THE CRYPTIC NOTE HANDWRITTEN BY MAO ON APRIL 30, 1976:
"WITH YOU IN CHARGE, I'M AT EASE." THIS ARTICLE PUBLICLY
REVEALS FOR THE FIRST TIME THAT MAO DELIVERED HIMSELF
OF OTHER THOUGHTS ON THE SAME OCCASION: "TAKE YOUR
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CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 PEKING 02615 210922Z

TIME, DON'T BE ANXIOUS" AND " ACT IN LINE WITH THE
PAST PRINCIPLES." YET WHEN HUA "TRANSMITTED" THE
LATTER TWO "DIRECTIVES" TO THE POLITBURO, HE INEX-
PLICABLY HELD BACK "WITH YOU IN CHARGE, I'M AT EASE"
(REF B). AND EVEN MORE STRIKING IS THE ADMISSION LATER
IN THE ARTICLE THAT "CHAIRMAN MAO'S INSTRUCTION 'ACT

IN LINE WITH THE PAST PRINCIPLES' WAS MADE ON A SPECIFIC QUESTION" (I.E. HANDLING OF PROVINCIAL PROBLEMS STEM-MING FROM THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST TENG HSIAO-PING). IT IS THEREFORE EVIDENT THAT MAO'S OTHER "DIRECTIVE" OF APRIL 30--"WITH YOU IN CHARGE, I'M AT EASE"--WAS EQUALLY LIMITED TO "A SPECIFIC QUESTION." MAO APPROVED HUA'S HANDLING OF THE ANTI-TENG CAMPAIGN AND ATTENDANT PROVINCIAL DIFFICULTIES; HE DID NOT SANCTIFY HUA AS FUTURE PARTY LEADER.

3. HUA'S CREDIBILITY IS FURTHER ERODED BY THE COMMENTARY'S BLOW-BY-BLOW ACCOUNT OF HOW THE RADICALS PRESENTED "ACT ACCORDING TO THE PRINCIPLES LAID DOWN" (FIRST PUBLISHED IN THE SEPTEMBER 16 JOINT EDITORIAL) AS MAO'S TRUE STATEMENT. BY LATE SEPTEMBER NO ONE HAD CHALLENGED THIS QUOTE: THE COMMENTARY REVEALS THAT "TOWARD THE END OF SEPTEMBER, SOME LEADING COMRADES SERIOUSLY POINTED OUT TO (THE GANG OF FOUR) THAT THEIR PROPAGANDA POLICY WAS WRONG IN PLAYING UP (THE QUOTE)." IN OTHER WORDS, THESE "COMRADES" CHALLENGED EMPHASIS, NOT VERACITY. AND, ASTONISHINGLY, THE COMMENTARY MAKES IT APPEAR THAT EVEN HUA, THE RECIPIENT OF MAO'S SCRAWLED DIRECTIVES, WAS UNCERTAIN OF THEIR CONTENT. ON OCTOBER 2 HUA DELETED THE PASSAGE FROM CHIAO'S UN SPEECH DRAFT, COMMENTING THAT "I'VE CHECK IT UP. THREE OF THE CHARACTERS ARE WRONG COMPARED WITH THE ORIGINAL IN CHAIRMAN MAO'S OWN HANDWRITING. THE WORDS CHAIRMAN MAO WROTE...ARE 'ACT IN LINE WITH THE PAST PRINCIPLES.'"

4. PRESUMABLY ADDRESSING SPOKEN AND UNSPOKEN QUESTIONS, THE COMMENTARY ASKS DEFENSIVELY "IS THIS JUST A DIFFERENCE IN WORDS?" BUT ITS REPLY SKIRTS THE ISSUE, CHARGING MERELY THAT "THE GANG OF FOUR INDEED HAD 'PRINCIPLES LAID DOWN' OF THEIR OWN." IN THE END, THE READER IS LEFT PERPLEXED, THINKING THAT ONLY "A DIFFERENCE IN WORDS" INDEED IS INVOLVED.

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 PEKING 02615 210922Z

5. THE COMMENTARY CONTAINS ANOTHER UNSETTLING ADMISSION: "THE HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE OF ALL REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS SHOWS THAT THE DEATH OF THE GREAT LEADER OF A REVOLUTION ALWAYS MEANS VERY SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES FOR THE REVOLUTIONARY CLASSES AND REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT." EQUATION OF CHAIRMAN MAO AND THE CHINESE REVOLUTIONARY EXPERIENCE WITH OTHER REVOLUTIONARY LEADERS AND EXPERIENCE IS HIGHLY UNUSUAL.

6. THE COMMENTARY FURTHER SUGGESTS THAT THE GANG OF

FOUR WERE BY MEANS AS ISOLATED AS THEY HAVE BEEN
SUBSEQUENTLY PORTRAYED. IT REVEALS THAT YAO WEN-YUAN
AND UNIVERSITY "ACCOMPLICES" ARRANGED FOR PEOPLE TO
WRITE "AN OATH OF FEALTY" TO CHIANG CHING AND THAT
"CERTAIN BAD ELEMENTS" DEMANDED THAT CHIANG CHING BE
NAMED PARTY CHAIRMAN. HOW WIDESPREAD THE OATH-WRITING
WAS REMAINS CONJECTURAL, BUT USLO OFFICER HAS SEEN
(BUT COULD NOT READ CONTENTS) A FOUR-PAGE DOCUMENT FOR
INTERNAL CIRCULATION ENTITLED "SEPTEMBER 24 OATH OF
FEALTY WRITTEN TO CHIANG CHING BY NEW CHINA NEWS AGENCY."
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